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# Israeli Invasion Sets Soothsayers To Searching

Within hours after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the State Department threw together a "crisis task force" of its top Mideast specialists to give President Reagan and his foreign policy advisers the answer to the big question: what will happen next?

Based on their years of expertise in the arcane business of linking cause and effect in the tumultuous Middle East, the analysts produced their best estimate of the likely turn of events. One of these estimates, stamped "Secret," was shown to my associate Dale Van Atta.

The report breaks down the soothsayers' conclusions into short-term and long-term possibilities. In appraising the clarity of the experts' crystal ball, it is important to remember that these are the forecasts the White House relies on to plan U.S. responses in this vital part of the world.

First, the short-term predictions, which were made 10 days ago:

"Israel will expand the 'Free Lebanon' corridor nominally controlled by Maj. [Saad] Haddad's militia to include, at a minimum, the Litani

River and Beaufort Castle. Most of the population, largely Catholic, will be driven out, as in 1978.

"It is unlikely that Israel will allow United Nations peacekeeping forces in the expanded Haddad corridor, nor is it likely that the nations contributing to the forces will wish to maintain troops in Lebanon under the circumstances.

"Syrian forces are unlikely to seriously engage Israel, except in demonstrative air intercepts, unless Israeli forces penetrate Bekaa Valley. Even demonstrative actions have potential for escalation, of course."

Other estimates warn that full-scale Syrian intervention might well occur if local Syrian commanders elect to attack the wide-ranging Israeli troops; in this situation, the entire Syrian army could be dragged into the conflict. And because the Syrians are no match for Israeli forces, this leads to the most ominous short-term prediction of all: "In the event of a serious threat to the Syrian government, direct Soviet intervention becomes a distinct likelihood."

Now for the long-range predictions:

"Israel will continue to supply arms to Phalangist [right-wing Christian] forces in the north. The combination of increased Phalangist military strength, the weakened Palestinian position and the influx of refugees to the north is explosive, and may reignite the civil war.

"Much depends on the restrictions placed on Haddad's forces after the main elements of the IDF [Israeli Defense Force] have withdrawn. In the past, Israel has encouraged Haddad's unprovoked attacks on Lebanese civilian targets as a means of increasing popular resentment against the Palestinians."

"European frustration with American initiatives in the Middle East will probably result in a renewed European initiative."

"Further American efforts to interest moderate Arab nations in the Camp David formula would probably be counterproductive."

"The future of the Palestine Liberation Organization is uncertain. If [Yasser] Arafat falls, the Palestinian movement will probably disintegrate into radical splinter groups."